



U.S. Department of Justice  
United States Attorney  
District of Kansas

## NEWS RELEASE

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### KANSAS CITY, KANSAS, MAN CONVICTED OF TRANSPORTING STOLEN FIREARMS FROM MISSOURI TO KANSAS

KANSAS CITY, Kan. – United States Attorney Eric Melgren announced that **Oliver Vandevender**, 29, Kansas City, Kansas, was convicted on January 16, 2004, in U.S. District Court in Kansas City, Kansas, following a three day jury trial of **one count conspiracy to transport stolen firearms in interstate commerce from Missouri to Kansas; one count of knowingly transporting stolen firearms from Missouri to Kansas; one count of storing stolen firearms in Kansas City, Kansas; and one count of being a felon in possession of firearms.**

Melgren stated that according to evidence presented at trial, on July 25, 2003, **Vandevender**, along with co-defendant **Paula Pruitt**, 34, Kansas City, Kansas, drove a truck through a fence surrounding a residence in Platte County, Missouri, broke into the residence, and stole a gun safe containing twenty-eight firearms. Vandevender and Pruitt placed the gun safe in the truck and drove to Kansas City, Kansas, where they used a saw to open the gun safe. Vandevender and Pruitt stored the stolen firearms at their residence in Kansas City, Kansas, and then disposed of the firearms.

Vandevender faces a maximum of five years for conspiracy; a maximum of ten years for transporting and storing stolen firearms; and a maximum of ten years for being a felon in possession of a firearm. Sentencing is set for April 12, 2004, at 10:30 a.m. before U.S. District Judge Carlos Murguia.

Co-defendant **Pruitt** entered a guilty plea on December 8, 2003, to one count of transporting stolen firearms from Missouri to Kansas and one count of being an unlawful user of or addicted to a controlled substance in possession of firearms. Pruitt faces a maximum of ten years in federal prison without parole. Sentencing is set for March 22, 2004, at 10:30 a.m.

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Co-defendant **John G. Austin**, 40, Kansas City, Kansas, is charged with one count of conspiracy to transport stolen firearms in interstate commerce from Missouri to Kansas; one count of knowingly transporting stolen firearms from Missouri to Kansas; one count of storing stolen firearms in Kansas City, Kansas; two counts of disposing of stolen firearms and one count of being a felon in possession of firearms on July 25, 2003, and July 26, 2003. Austin is currently in custody in Platte County, Missouri, on other charges, no court dates have yet been set.

Melgren commended the excellent work of the Platte County, Missouri, Sheriff's Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives in this investigation and Assistant U.S. Attorney Terra Morehead in this prosecution.